

OPPOSITION TESTIMONY SB 34 OF

ANDREA R. YAGODA

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing , Ranking Member Ingram and Members of the Senate Education Committee I am here today to testify against SB 34. I am Andrea R Yagoda. I have been a resident of Ohio for fifty years, 46 of those as a resident of Delaware County.

Regardless of which version of the Ten Commandments we reference, the first four (4) of the Commandments relate to the relationship between individuals and God. They call attention to monotheism or belief that there is only one god, worship, and reverence. These first four (4) commandments lay the foundation for a spiritual life. They require individuals to honor and respect a divine authority.

The following six commandments speak about interpersonal relationships and moral conduct. The order in which the commandments appear suggests a structure where one's relationship with God serves as the basis for ethical behavior toward other individuals.

The Ten Commandments are not simply a list of basic moral rules. They are a religious text that comes from a particular religious tradition. Google the Ten Commandments and they are referred to consistently as a religious document not a historical one as this bill proposes. In fact the two proponents of this bill are both men of faith, represent religious institutions .

There are various versions of the Ten Commandments. The Jewish faith has two versions, the Christians and the Protestants have their own version.

Some of the Commandments refer to “thou shalt not kill” while another (Torah) speaks to “thou shalt not murder” recognizing that killing and murder are not the same as one requires malice and the other may not. And if this body wanted to be true to the commandments we would have gun reform to prevent killings. Which version will be chosen?

In Louisiana they chose the Protestant version of the Commandments. In finding that the law was unconstitutional, the Judge wrote:

Each of the Plaintiffs' minor children will be forced 'in every practical sense,' through Louisiana's required attendance policy, to be a 'captive audience' and to participate in a religious exercise: reading and considering a specific version of the Ten Commandments, one posted in every single classroom, for the entire school year, regardless of the age of the student or subject matter of the course” Rev.Roake v. Brumley, (2024 5th Cir) 24-30706

As such, this bill is a violation of the establishment clause of the Constitution, which forbids the government from establishing an official religion. It also specifies that the government must neither promote nor inhibit religion.

This Bill is based on the false premise that we are a "Judeo-Christian" nation. This country is Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Mormon, etc. and it is also agnostic, atheist and everything in between. Posting the Ten Commandments favors one particular religious tradition as a source of inspiration and guidance in violation of the separation of church and state.

Recently this legislative body passed SB 1. In that Bill public higher education institutions are prohibited from addressing matters that are controversial and may cause a student to feel uncomfortable. I am a 72 year old,

independent woman who believes in everything her Jewish religion stands for and teaches and yet I do not believe in a divine entity ie God. The existence of a God is controversial. The first time I attended a session of this body we were asked to stand in prayer. I felt uncomfortable in doing so but I stood. And then to my utter dismay we were lead in a prayer to Jesus Christ which my religion does not pray to. The next time I attended a session, I did not stand but this too made me feel uncomfortable. As a result, I decided I would no longer attend a session of this body. This body in the House that belongs to me and every Ohioan not just those that believe in God. How would a young child feel having to confront a plaque every day commanding that s/he honor God when they do not believe in the same?

I would not want my children to attend a school which displayed a plaque commanding them to honor God, commanding them to obey the Sabbath and I would not want them to come home and ask me what is adultery or what is the meaning of coveting your neighbor's wife.

I do not want a religious institution having the wealth paying for a plaque of the Ten Commandments in my child's school. I fear that a school may choose the Commandments over a true historical document based on the pledge to pay for the same.

Parents can teach their children morals and ethics. They do not need a religious plaque laying it out for them. I believe we lead by example not by words on a plaque. Do you even hear yourselves? The party that endorses a man who

admits to “grabbing women’s pussies” ; A man who has committed adultery twice; a man that defrauded students in his University; a man who raided his charity. Some of the religious institutions in this country have failed miserably in setting examples of ethics and morality. I want our children to be taught acceptance, tolerance, diversity not that they should single out other children and be hostile to them. I want them to be charitable, not to take advantage of the disadvantaged, to reject violence and to believe in justice for all. None of this is contained in the Ten Commandments but is contained in the bible.

Stop trying to force religious beliefs on our children. You say you believe in parental rights? Then let the parents teach their children not the government when it comes to religion, morals and ethics as you have shown that this government may be lacking in both ethics and morals.

I ask you to vote no on this bill.

Andrea R. Yagoda